



nickelodeon OUR WORLD

Welcome to the first edition of *Our World*, a new newsletter series from the Nickelodeon Public Affairs and Research teams dedicated to exploring kid agency. Parents and caregivers, educators, and organizations can learn along with us as we discover and share what kids think about their world, their place in it, and their ability to make change.



Our World newsletter is part of Nickelodeon's new global initiative to inspire kids and provide them with tools to activate their individual and collective agency.

Agency is the ability to make choices and decisions that impact your life and experiences. For kids, developing agency requires opportunities for them to build confidence in themselves and their decision making.

When kids decide what they want to wear, what afterschool activity to participate in, or which books to read, they're exercising their **individual agency**. When they work with others to start a new club, campaign for a longer lunch period, or contribute to their school's garden, they are exercising their **collective agency**. Both individual and collective agency have a dynamic impact on kids' mental health and wellbeing, especially for youth from under-resourced communities and those most impacted by systemic oppression.



VS



Agency leads to increased empathy, confidence, and self-efficacy – kids' belief in their ability to succeed in making change.

Ballard & Ozer, 2016; Lerner et al., 2013

AGENCY IS A KID'S RIGHT



Kids have the right to be seen, heard, and respected as citizens of the world and their thoughts, ideas, and actions matter. They are an important, and unique, part of our families and communities that contribute an innate sense of wonder, a strong curiosity, and uninhibited playfulness. Nickelodeon wants to highlight the untapped potential of kid-participation in our society.

What would happen if we started to view them as thoughtful problem-solvers, collaborators, and agents of change?

IT COULD BE THAT KIDS' RELENTLESS OPTIMISM AND JOYFUL CREATIVITY IS JUST WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS.



KIDS' BELIEF IN THEIR ABILITY TO INFLUENCE CHANGE ON A LARGE SCALE IS LIMITED

Kids today face a tumultuous time in an increasingly complex world, and it's taking a toll. **In December 2022, Nickelodeon asked more than 800 kids, ages 8-13, if they felt they had the power to change today's issues – 46% answered no.**

When asked about specific problems in the U.S., there were multiple large-scale issues where **the majority (at least 50%) of kids felt they couldn't influence change or that they didn't know how to influence change.**

Kids' belief in their ability to influence change isn't necessarily due to a lack of confidence, want, or need, but may instead stem from a lack of compelling and accessible pathways to engage in change. Even on a smaller scale, **69% of kids said they didn't know about ways they, as kids, could get involved with their communities.**



DO YOU FEEL YOU CAN IMPACT CHANGE?

46%
NO



Issues kids feel they can't impact:



INFLATION



MEDICAL ACCESS



SCHOOL SHOOTINGS



NATURAL DISASTERS/
CLIMATE ISSUES



FAKE NEWS



POVERTY



HOMELESSNESS



POLITICAL DIVIDES

IT STARTS WITH SMALL ACTIONS

Though kids may feel powerless in creating change on a macro level (e.g., inflation, political divides, etc.), they do see an opportunity to influence change on a micro level, in familiar environments where they feel in control. For example, within their daily lives and in their personal actions, like the amount of exercise they engage

in or how much time they spend outside. They also feel confident in their ability to create change around bullying, interestingly, one of their top concerns. This may be because standing up to or for someone is a clear action that has a direct and immediate impact on what is happening around them.



"I can change MY OWN situation, so that I can overcome it. And maybe help my friends if they [have] issues. I can maybe help other kids in my class too."

–12 year old



KINDNESS IS KEY

In Nick research, both kids and parents consistently and continually recognize the importance of kindness, noting that it is both essential to being a good person and making a difference. Across all demographics, the majority of kids surveyed ranked kindness as one of the most important factors that help someone make a difference.



"I can be nice to kids at school and encourage kids to do the right thing."
– 8 year old



WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT HELPS SOMEONE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

| BOYS | GIRLS | AGES 8-10 | AGES 11-13 | WHITE | HISPANIC | BLACK | ASIAN |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| TOP RATED | | | | | | | |
| Kindness | Kindness | Kindness | Kindness | Kindness | Kindness | Kindness | Kindness |
| Money | Volunteering | Education | Volunteering | Volunteering | Education | Money | Education |
| Education | Money | Money | Money | Money | Money | Volunteering | Money |
| | | | | | | Volunteering | Support |

PATHWAYS TO PARTICIPATION

Young kids can do amazing things but they can't do it alone. The kids Nick spoke to recognized that money, education, and volunteering are also important factors in making a difference. They need adult collaborators who provide the support, guidance, and resources needed to make their vision a reality.



Remember, it starts with small actions! Parents and caregivers can begin by noticing the everyday opportunities where kids can learn new skills or take on new responsibilities; anything that gives them a chance to succeed and contribute! Providing kids the opportunity to enact their agency, even in small ways, helps strengthen their sense of self, their value, and belonging. [Zeldin, Petrokubi & MacNeil, 2007](#)

Though most of the kids we asked in our research were unsure of how to engage in change within their communities, their willingness was clear. **THEY HAVE THOUGHTS, VISIONS, AND VOICES THAT CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.**

Follow the *Our World* newsletter as Nick continues to share its research on kid agency. Visit [Nickhelps.com](https://nickhelps.com) to explore resources and activities that promote kid agency and reach out to publicaffairs@nick.com for more information on ways to get involved.



WHAT KIND OF CHANGE DO YOU THINK YOU COULD MAKE?



"I can be the change I want to see, spread love, get other people to help like a grownup or other kids have programs about things like bullying awareness."

– 12 year old



"By speaking my voice and letting it be heard."

– 9 year old



"I think that kids have a pretty big voice in some issues, especially those that affect kids more than other people (school shootings, bullying)."

– 13 year old



About Nickelodeon

Nickelodeon is all about empowering kids. For years, we've fueled their dreams by inspiring their imaginations, sparking their creativity, celebrating their spirit, and amplifying their voices. These values continue to be at the heart of what we do. Nickelodeon extends special thanks to Laura Stricker, Seth Tourjee, and Janella Watson for their contributions to this newsletter.